JAPAN EAST TIMOR MEMO

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A Petition to Murdani in Tokyo

On 14 June representatives of the Free East Timor Japan Coalition visited the Indonesian embassy in Tokyo and handed over its petition which was addressed to Defence Minister Benny Murdani who was in Japan to attend the Asia-Pasific defence ministers meeting. The petition stated the UN had adopted a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of the Indonesian forces from the territory and called for a solution of the problem by a negotiation which includes the resistance under the supervision of the UN. (source: Mainichi Shimbun, a nation-wide daily)

About one month after the Murdani's visit to Japan, at the beginning of July, Tsutomu Kawara, the director-general of the Japan's Self-Defence Agency met with President Suharto in Jakarta. (He also met with Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.) This is regarded as a sign that Japan is seeking cooperation with Indonesia, and perhaps with Singapore too, on security maintenance of the region, especially of the Malacca Strait which is vital for oil shipping to Japan. The Japanese government has been so far reluctant to play a role in the military field because of the voices from pragmatic liberals demanding more expenditure on economic development than on defence while letting the US do that job. And stimulating strong sentiments against Japanese militarism should be avoided in order to make Japanese business expansion abroad more acceptable. But the situation is changing. The US is pushing Japan to increase its share in the total cost of security maintenance in Far East and other regions where the US has interest. It is, however, impossible for Japan to play an obvious military role because of her peace-loving constitution (so-called "no-war" constitution) and still strong anti-military feelings both inside and outside the country. What Japan can do is to give "economic aid" for a bolstering of defence capabilities of the countries in the region. (FEER 14 July)

The Indonesia's radio monitoring project funded by Japan was one. It is likely that the moniroting station in Kupang aims at destroying the radio Maubere. The Fretilin's press release GIF/PRN 4/VII/88 revealed that a Japanese truck "Hino" was being used by the Indonesian forces in East Timor. ("Hino" is an automobile manufacturer specialized in truck and bus.)

Check the Border Line in School Textbooks

The Japanese translation of Carmel & Liem's "A War against East Timor" was titled "East Timor which was wiped out of the map", because in fact the border line between East Timor and Indonesian West Timor was not drawn in many books, including school textbooks. In Japan all school textbooks up to high school must clear the government's check and need to be authorized. Naturally this system gives the government enormous power to control the content of school textbooks. In fact as to controversial political points such as the interpretation of the Pasific War or negative aspects of the rapid industrialization Japan experienced, textbook publishers are heavily pressured to rewrite in line with the government (conservative) perception.

In November 1986 when Mr. Eda, secretary of the Dietmen's Forum on East Timor, made an inquiry at the Standing Committee on Education about the treatment of the border line between East Timor and Inodnesia in authorized textbooks, an official answered the Japanese government's perception was that the area was effectively governed by the Indonesian government but that Japan was not in a position to judge to which country it belonged. He also explained every year the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publishes a kind of handbook on countries of the world in which East Timor is listed under "Other Important Areas", so not as part of Indonesia. And in a map of the book East Timor is distinguished from the rest of the island by a dotted line. Another official said that it would be appropriate for the government to guide (textbook publishers) in accordance with the line of this handbook.

After this the Osaka group sent a letter to various textbook publishers asking them to improve the border line in their publications. In most cases East Timor was

described as part of Indonesia. Some publishers responded sincerely and promised to draw the border line.

East Timor in Pop-Fiction

"AERA", the Asahi Simbun's new-type weekly for young urban businessmen, took up East Timor in its pop-style politics column, "Lucid Contemporary Lecture". This column explains recent international issues in fiction-like narrative style with some cartoons. (In face some parts are fiction.) The story of East Timor in AERA No.9 (July 19) starts with the "Super Special Correspondent" Juzo AERA's interview with José, a Timorese refugee now living in Darwin. José tells Juzo he has once been tortured. Juzo then enters East Timor and meets Atsu, an underground woman activist, who explains that the seemingly peaceful situation is possible just by "power". Juzo is guided by Atsu to the place where the guerrilla stay. Atsu tells Juzo that many Timorese died during the Japanese occupation, and that Japanese aid to Indonesia hampers the independence movement. The radio monitoring project is mentioned. And the parliamentary mission to Portugal, the existence of silidarity groups in Japan, Roque's visit, Japanese increased aid pledged at the IGGI, Murdani's visit are also included.

a quiet village ....

"They killed people indiscriminately."

"Soon we reach the guerrilla's base."